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Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Tyrell,
With cordial regards,
George Herbert Clarke

Christmas, 1930

THE HASTING DAY

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Poems by
GEORGE HERBERT CLARKE

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To My Students

Who, less insensible than sodden clay
In a sea-river's bed at ebb of tide,
Could have beheld with undelighted heart
So many happy youths, so wide and fair
A congregation in its budding-time
Of health, and hope, and beauty?

WORDSWORTH: *The Prelude*, Book III.

PREFATORY NOTE

THE author has here brought together some fifty selections from his poems, old and new. A few of them have appeared in an earlier volume, and others have enjoyed the hospitality of the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Athenæum*, the *Forum*, the *Westminster Gazette*, *Saturday Night*, the *Dalhousie Review*, *Willison's Monthly*, the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, the *Queen's Quarterly*, the *Sewanee Review*, etc., to whose editors thanks are due for permitting their inclusion in this book.

G. H. C.

Queen's University
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F A R - W A N D E R E R

MAN is not born of his mother's pains,
But as the Vast Design ordains;

A stranger to his troubled mother,
A brute with no brute for a brother;

A loaf too heavy for its leaven,
God in blind grapple for a heaven.

He stirs at beauty in lake or linn,
Yet his homeless heart is woe within.

Bitter and brief the love he spurns
To haste to the killing with kings and kerns.

As the tale of a dream in low tones told,
Or a fading rune on a record old;

As the foam of a wave that swells unseen,
Rises, and ruins, and hath not been;

Lo man the minim that shouts his pride
O'er cities and ships and much beside;

Lo man the lonely vagabond,
Aflounder in his own despond;

Lo who for wisdom hungereth
The fated, feeble prey of death;

Lo man afraid, yet gaily brave,
Hoping he has a soul to save!

Man who a thousand things doth guess
Knows only his own homelessness.

The birds have nests, the fox a bed—
Man hath not where to lay his head.

LIFE IS NO GENTLEMAN

(*Song*)

LIFE is no gentleman—
Life is a lout
Who boasteth and burneth,
Who turneth, returneth
About and about.

Death is a gentleman—
Generous Death
Forgetteth our errors,
Calmeth our terrors,
Comforteth!

TRANSIENCE

FRAIL shapes a Dreamer dreams
We careful earthlings are—
From some far Moon moonbeams
Afloat far.

Born of that brooding Brain,
Magical men o' the Moon,
When must we home again?—
Ah, soon, soon!

AT THE SHRINE

*Mary, humanity's Woman, immaculate Mother,
Is it Thou, Thou alone, that art pure, and never
another?*

For the babe at my breast many deaths did my body
endure:

The girl died, the virgin—yea, all that the Past
counted pure.

Then the deepest last dying, the shudder so woeful
and wild,

The smothering darkness . . . the pitiful cry of
the child!

O Mary, the bliss that came after—the rapture of
bliss—

How I would laugh him to laughter, and how we
would kiss!

How I would clasp him in terror when trouble would
linger and stay!

Trouble? for any but him, my masterful man-child
always.

How he would lie in my bosom, and how I would
breathe his name,
How I would watch him and love him and dream
of his lordly far fame!

'Twas a wraith, a mistake—'twas not *I* that lived
there in the Past,
A pale, futile girl—now a woman, a woman at last!

For how could she know, that pale one, so saintly
and so clean,
That Madonna dwells eternal in the breast of Mag-
dalene?

*Mary, humanity's Woman, immaculate Mother,
Is it Thou, Thou alone, that art pure, and never
another?*

A WISDOM FROM THE DEAD

SLOWLY all-devouring earth
Obliterates my death and birth—
Creeping cannibal of clay,
Wastes and crumbles me away.

All-devouring, for he feeds
On the fanes of countless creeds,
On prison-walls and palace-towers
And the immeasurable hours.

Thou that movest overhead,
Mark a wisdom from the dead:
I have learned, dissolving here,
Man's sole enemy is fear.

My whole life long I was afraid,
Doubted, hesitated, prayed—
A minim lost within a maze
Of dusty and deceitful days.

Sorely worn I wandered till
Down I sank and lay right still,
Believing in my quiet bed
It was better to be dead.

No. Light from heat, and peace from pain!
Ah, friend, were I to live again,
Fate I should face with stoic brow;
But I must pass to silence now.

We are. We cease. We shall not be.
Change only is eternity;
And good and evil, sweet or strange,
Are changing ministers of Change.

ON MY DOG'S DEATH

My friend has gone
Through the door of darkness;
Wearily waiting,
He fainted and fell
Upon its threshold,
And ghostly fingers
Out of the silence
Laid hold upon him
And drew him through.

He did not know
The subtle secrets
Of Death the wary;
Deeply he loved me,
My little comrade—
His eyes were shining
With lights of worship,
Of modest wonder,
When I caressed him.
Even at the last,
Before the darkness,
He never doubted:
He thought his lord
Was tired or troubled,
But would surely save him.

Thy lord? Ah, comrade,
Futile thy faith,
And futile my will
To heal and keep thee!
We dwelt together
As midges merely,
Afloat in the fathomless
Dust of the ages.

Drifted we near
Unto each other,
Enjoying the sunlight
Playing upon us;
And then, on a sudden,
Came the chill glooming,
The separation.

And yet . . . I feel . . .
There are strange things about love:
Love is so loving,
So patient, enduring,
Through the doom of defeat
And utter sorrow!
There are strange things about love . . .
I feel their strangeness.

Love may be somehow
More than the motes are
That flutter to feel it,
Older than ages,
Deeper than heartbreak
And death and distance—
Greater perhaps
Than It that orders
The swing of the planets,
Than all things else
That are or shall be.

The love I bear thee,
My little dead comrade,
Forever is trying
To tell me something.

I am learning to listen.

TO THE MEMORY OF TOBY

(A Cocker Spaniel)

You loved to lie by the wizard winter fire,
Watching the flames flourish and fork and spire;
Or, if you dozed, growling with drowsy ire.

When you awoke, if you saw me reading a book,
Upon my shoe-strings longingly would you look;
'To loose them by stealth what endless trouble you
took!

How you would rush for your rations and leap elate!
You gobbled them, trencherman Toby, rather than
ate,
Returning anon to linger and lick the plate.

More fearless you than your lord, freely I own;
You would march up to a mastiff guarding a bone,
And beguile or bedevil him somehow into a loan.

At the sound of the motor starting, you within hail,
Instant you were and urgent and sure to prevail,
Wagging the while your ridiculous wisp of a tail.

Once aboard, you were drunk with doggish delight,
Barked at pedestrian pups, jumped left and right,
Or under my arm as I drove would wedge yourself
tight.

When you were quiet in your nightly nest
We held rare talk together, while I caressed
Your silky ears, or ruffled your brow or breast.

And now—you are as though you had never been!
In a year you were born and perished—passed from
the scene;
Is love like that but a memory? . . . What does it
mean?

ON MY IRISH TERRIER'S SHADOW

LIFTING little tawny feet,
Jerry patters down the street,
Hunting jolly bones to eat.

Jerry's shadow trots beside,
Comically magnified,
Keeping step with awkward stride.

Something innocent, forlorn,
By that simple shade is borne—
Yet of Fate a puny scorn.

* * * *

This wandering Shadow of the Sun
Laughs and laments till all is done
And mightier systems are begun.

EN ROUTE

“No beauty, she!” I inwardly commented,
Glancing across the aisle to where she sat,
For she was slack and awkward, creased with fat,
(By men an ugly woman is resented,
Her presence makes them vaguely discontented,
She disappoints—they can’t forgive her that);
I looked again and saw her restless brat
Pulling her skirt and driving her demented.

Bright-eyed and chubby was the little sweep,
He worried till she took him under wing:
How gently round him did her huge arm creep
Until he slept for bliss of mothering;
The woman was illumined!—Commonplace?—
She held him, watched him with a shining face.

DEBATE

I. MIND SPEAKS

TRIVIAL minim, renounce with shame
Your wavering will, your idle woes!
Endless ages ere you became
This planet drove from the sun aflame
To an end ordained, as I suppose.

On she will plunge when you have died
(A dusty mote dissolved and gone),
No chart to teach her reef or tide,
Master nor mate to be her guide,
Secret and strange and all alone.

She must go down to the wastes that wait,
The perilous pools that shall impend;
The thing create shall be uncreate;
Blindly she drives to find her fate—
Vast, vacant silence shall be the end.

II. SOUL SPEAKS

That I am a mote is doubtless true,
Yet the verb *to be* has a future tense;
To cease is to change from "I" and "you";
The planet may pass, ay persons too,
Yet both persist, with a difference.

"Create" and "uncreate," word-worried Mind—
Have you only one key to interpret Soul?
Design is the Real, not things designed,
And "life" is a symbol of Life behind:
Slowly the Weaver weaves the Whole.

WAITING

AGAIN, a song!

Would he be silent? Silence and doubt are wrong.
It is not long. . . . Nay. . . . Nay, it is not long:
Even now his sturdy wings must beat toward home
and me.

Oh, let me sing

As though my notes he waited, listening
Somehow amazed;—let his mate's music bring
His erring flight to yearned-for rest, unerringly!

Hark! . . . 'Tis not yet . . .

But I am happy; 'tis not meet to fret.

Am I not happy? The sun is well-nigh set,
And soon, and soon he homes him to the old beech
tree.

Ay, soon! . . . Ay, soon!

Another might be lying dead, the wind a-croon;
Broken his wings, unheeding sun or moon;
But not my love; my strong one cometh back to me.

Dear love, do not,
(If thou art hiding near the trysting-spot)
Do not delay, though sweet the little plot!
I wait, and oh, sing as I may, Fear also waits for
thee.

* * * *

All song is done. . . .
Shrunk to nothing is the shameful sun;
And out the stars are coming, one by one;
And in the cold night lies my life, under a beechen
tree!

THE SILENT SISTERS OF THE POOR

MEEKLY, with folded hands and patient brows,
Come two from out the ivy-clustered door;
A cross is on the altar of their House—
It hushed their voices while it heard their vows;
Ay me—the Silent Sisters of the Poor!

The cross upon the altar is of gold,
And coldly gleams in the chill chapel air;—
Is it for this their bosoms are so cold,
Nor beat as they were wont to beat of old?—
Or is a wintry cross enfixéd *there*?

The sun is dimly drooping down the west;
The ancient House against his glory stands
Sombre and gaunt and dark; and, darkly drest,
Two figures seem to fade within its breast,
Meekly, with patient brows and folded hands.

THE MOTHER

Wise with heart's wisdom and divinely mild,
Storing her soul with stars and birds and flowers,
She shapes the spirit of her little child
To secret patterns woven in holy hours.

OLD

SAYS the son of man: "I am old!"—
Yet he knows there are older things:
The wary wolf on the wold;
The windy, spumy wings
Of the sea-gull; and the sea-creatures, careful and
cold.

Likewise, though these be old,
There are ever older things;
Mountains in snow-clouds stoled;
The golden downgoings
Of the spent sun, in his harness of changing gold.

Oh what is it then to be old?—
Still older and older things
Pulse through the Vast untold
In æonian journeyings:
Majestic orbs and orbits, mysterious, manifold.

THE RE-LIGHTING

BEACONS were burning on the Cornish coast:

One caught and blazed, another caught and blazed,
Until a file of fiery fingers raised

Weird whispers, warnings, post unto lonely post. . . .

'Twas but an afterglow, a revived ghost

Of the old custom worthy to be praised;

Some looked, and lingered not; some longer gazed,
And some were strangely silent, awed almost.

Faint gleams in the gloom, wherefore did we forget
The year of our Lord, the year of our king, the
years

Of our brief lives, and feel the eternal fret

Of the sea, and wonder with what faith and fears

Beside each flaming barrow dark forms had met,

Begging their gods to hear what the soul hears?

THE TENANT OF TIME

AGES departed
A great House was started
By that Unknown Builder
Whose methods bewilder
Less cunning contrivers.
He fashioned him divers
Galleries, towers;
Avenues, bowers;
Cool greening glades;
Courts, colonnades;
Spires, summits exalted
O'er chapels rock-vaulted;
Clear waters falling;
Birds cooing or calling;
Calm rivers creeping
Through lazy vales sleeping. . . .

(Ages hence 'twill be vapour
Again, for the Shaper.)

Room, river and glade
This Fashioner made
For our habitation,
Fixed the lease's duration
At years not a hundred

(Often I've wondered
Whether extensible
To tenants more sensible);
The rental exacted
Is slowly subtracted—
Mortality styled—
From each creature and child;
Nor is it a pittance
We pay for the quittance
That Death has in waiting,
Though we know not the dating.

I prize the proud spaciousness,
Grandeur and graciousness;
The rooms without number
For labour or slumber;
Bazaar-babels chartered
That things may be bartered;
High choirs with crypts under
For worship and wonder;
Yet, in all my sojourning,
My bosom keeps burning
With ache to remember,
To revive the lost ember,
Unriddle my mystery,
My prehuman history—
That earlier dwelling

Past knowing or telling
Where I dreamed not of earthen
Blessing or burthen,
But, on the day fated,
Forsook all, migrated.

Now, mid new firmaments,
I feel my impermanence;
Live sadly or merrily,
This House is not verily
Mine, but a testing-house,
Traveller's resting-house;
All life that is in it
But guests for Life's minute;
Here they've halted, departed
On their journeys uncharted
In processional endless;
Each, fearful and friendless,
Futurity facing—
Aye tracing, retracing
New orbits and newer. . . .

O forlorn pursuer,
Eternally nearing
The peace disappearing,
The secret solution
Of the long Evolution;—

O prober and porer,
Still baffled explorer,
Ponder the Prophet-Word
Brahma and Hakeem heard;
The Law Moses gave to men
(One Law in thunderous Ten);
The Flow Heraclitus felt;
The Star where the shepherds knelt;
The Poetry Plato made;
Prayers Zarathustra prayed
To Fire and its fervent feuds;
Mild Christ's Beatitudes;—
Heed not mere scroll and stone,
Know what may not be known,
Heed but the Undertone
Sounding through all great souls unto thine
own:

Æon on æon climb

The vastnesses of Space! . . .

*Thou shalt find the placeless Place,
The timeless Time.*

TO A MEDICAL HUMANIST

OUR life is like a many-altared fane
Whose fundamentals are hidden, and whose spires
Lift and are lost in empyrean fires.

Mites multitudinous appear within:
Uncertain some and shrineless, but most remain
Telling worn beads, telling worn beads again.

Before their various altars priests of Art,
Of Labour, Law, their litanies begin,
And Commerce, and the Cure-of-Adam's-Sin.

Lingered a youth (scant time had he to spare)
About a crowded chancel—contentless heart—
A little while, and then withdrew apart;

For he had seen (in dreams?) down the long nave
A shrine that few had found, surpassing fair,
And longed exceedingly to enter there.

(Healing had called him, and Hellenic Song;—
Lover of one, of the other a tired slave,
He blessed the “true” god, and the “false” forgave.)

At last, when he drew nigh that sacred seat—
Medicine's acolyte, but mass-priest long
Of Poetry—he was ware that "right" and "wrong"

And "false" and "true" were gathered there at one;
Their ancient enmity was no more meet—
All they were hushed before the Paraclete.

For benison and beauty that far shrine
Gleamed like the Sun when autumn storms are done,
And comprehended all things like the Sun.

And all those lesser altars seemed but stairs
Leading to it—of Life the Soul divine
That knew that spirit's needs, and knoweth thine.

* * * *

Pale Keats strove thither on his path of pain,
And, though death took him, he had peace again;
That "pure serene" you breathe, for unawares
Your life in harmony enfolds your prayers.

IN MEMORIAM W. M.

THE boy was born of the moor, the mist, the loam,
And the sun and the sky and the sea of his Scottish
home.

He thought of the noisy world, unknown, unknow-
ing,
And the strange symbols wrought in its ongoing.

He thought of God and longed to limn His features,
And trace His ways with His inconstant creatures,

And hear His footfalls from hill to valley ranging,
His voice of storm slowly to silence changing.

He thought—he dreamed—he prayed—and God
approved him,
Touched him to wonder, and to wisdom moved him.

Scholar of God, he did not turn about,
But marked His voice, despite the pain of doubt
And the dark mysteries past finding out.

Honest his thought was and his heart was kind;
He did God's work to the gain that God designed;
What light was wanting here, *there* he shall find,
But—we who loved him—we remain behind.

CROSS-APPRAISALS

I

THAT dull clown at the plough,
Plodding till day be dim—

There's beauty in him, I vow,
Strange beauty in him!

II

That idle chap by the wall,
Why is he mooning about?—

There's nothing in him at all,
Far as I can make out.

TO ONE CALLED

Too good to guess your goodness, long you trod
The rugged trail to the truth that makes men free;
Until God said: "Be with the Friends of God,
The Elder Statesmen of Eternity!"

MANNA FOR FRIENDSHIP?

MANNA for friendship? Friendship faints not,
fails not;

Self-nurturing, it fears no wildernesses;

Bravely the slopes of Time it climbs, bewails not,
But the blest past, each passing moment, blesses.



II

OVER SALÈVE

(*Geneva*)

OVER Salève I heard a skylark singing
Blessèd be Beauty, Beauty! He soared and swirled,
In very ecstasy of flight outflinging
His breathless music on a broken world.

Joy, the sole faith of that so tiny flyer
Twining unnumbered notes in psalms of praise,
Lifted him up on high and ever higher
Till the blue heaven hid him from my gaze.

Still he adored, flooding the sky and mountain
With delicate waves of sound more silver-sweet
Than the pure flowing of a pebbled fountain
To desert-farers fainting in the heat.

Beggar am I for Beauty's least caress;
The little lark knows all her loveliness.

A SHORE SUNRISE

IN the long low haze of the lost horizon,
 Dim and dun,
The sea and the sun and the sky together
 Are as one—
So still and secret the sky and the sea there,
 And the sun!

Slowly, slowly the dawning waters
 Lift as they list,
Slowly the breath of the sea floats upward,
 And that pale mist,
Swimming and sifting through the sun's fingers,
 Gleams amethyst.

V A G R A N T

O'ER leaves and logs, up and down dell,
I scrambled. The oaks old
Dwindled in twilight. The Dark fell
Fold on fold.

Long lost there, frantic for any light,
I looked up: far abroad
The stars burned in the boundless night,
Serving God.

MOON - MOMENTS

I

WRAITH o' the Moon emaciate
As twilight clouds that drift and thin
And linger near her ghostly gate,
And fail and fade within.

II

Resurgent flow her golden tides,
For she and her Swart Swain have kissed . . .
From shadowy vales of silence glides
Incense of midnight mist.

S U N !

Sun! Sun! Sun! Sun!

Chorus of earth-birds, chorus of sky-birds, myriad
matins begun—

Cross-tangled adventurous music, anthems of awe,
Of appeal, adoration: litanies now of law,
And now raptured singings of trust in the truth of
the light,

The Lighter's proud power, and the rich-altared
East, all bedight

With the glimmer, the glow, and the glory, till it
mounts into flame,

And the mass-music mightily swells to the sovereign
Name—

Sun!

As his garment, incredibly golden, the edge of the
world has won,

And life is astir, and love is alive, and the sighing
and sleeping are done—

Sun! Sun! Sun!

EYEBRIGHT

(Canso, Nova Scotia)

ON the sea-cliff growing,
 Tiny wight,
With a brisk wind blowing
 You left and right;
Like a sturdy urchin,
 A merry mite,
The place you perch in
 Is your delight;
Your body braving
 The breeze at height,
Your wee arms waving
 Their pink and white;
In all my wending
 I've seen no sight
So full of friending
 As you, eyebright!

ROSE IN MY WATER-JAR

Rose in my water-jar,
Low overleaning,
Who may know what you are,
Your innermost meaning?

(So, roses on roses—
Rapt from what Bower?—
Bloom, till time closes
Their brief human hour.)

Rose in my water-jar,
Sweet thing I have taken,
Are you sad for your scar
And your fellows forsaken?—

Or, drooping down frailly,
Afar from the garden,
Breathe purely and palely
The fragrance of pardon?

Rose in my water-jar,
Low overleaning,
Who may know what you are,
Your innermost meaning?

REVIVAL

ALIVE and awake and aware is Spring:
Busily, busily, birds are a-wing,
While tiny hepaticas hardily cling
To hidden hollows before the fling
Of breezes gustily freshening—
And O in my heart a strange, sweet thing:
Hopes of old that quicken and sing,
With magic and music burgeoning.
Above the plough, a radiant ring,
The sunbeams warm and life-giving—
And O in my heart a strange, sweet thing:
Alive and awake and aware is Spring!

M I D W I N T E R

VAGUE moons and misty valleys: ghostly cold
Enfolds the night, mute immobility;—

Deeply defeated life, weary and old,
Stares at the shrivelled leaf, the stricken tree.

A LAVENDER LADY

A LAVENDER lady,
Holy and old,
Like a cool place and shady
When summer is bold;
In her deep eyes *Dimittis*—
The long release!—
Innumerable pities,
Healing peace.

O I worship unknown
Her frail, worn face;
With lavender blown
(An intangible trace,
A breath alone!)
About creamy lace;—
All my sins I atone
In this cool, shady place.

MOTIONLESS

MOTIONLESS, upon her bed,
By pale roses garlanded,
 Little Dorothea lies,
 Incommunicably wise
With the wisdom of the dead.

'Twas but yesterday she wed:
Now her golden, girlish head
 Wears another bridal guise,
 Motionless.

Were her slumber mine instead,
She could not be comforted:
 Streaming tears would blind her eyes—
 Yet, when Dorothea dies,
Silent I wait, with doubt and dread
 Motionless.

S I E G E

SHOUT, shout, O Storm!—
I have a shelter
Safe and warm,
Though lightnings form
And hail pelter.

Advance, assault,
Swearing and swelling!—
On your haunches halt
(Not yours the fault)
Before my dwelling!

Find you this place
Too firmly founded?—
Love built the base,
Love gave the grace,
By Love 'tis bounded.

FIRST AND SECOND THOUGHTS

I. RESIGNATION

Love touched you long ago, but not again—
A hint, a hope, a whisper, a surprise—

Touched you, and turned and parted; the slow
pain

Of that long heartbreak lingers in your eyes.

Love is a strange lord—many things in one:
Rapture ineffable and utter joy;

Yet he can make a shadow of the sun,
Break and beat down the battlements of Troy.

We poets watch him, think we know his ways,
Yet all our songs of him himself inspires,

And well he governs both our blame and praise
Once he hath lit in us his living fires.

Love laughs to find my flame so fervent true
And warms him well. Why should he kindle you?

II. HOPE

Should Fate involve me in his darkest fold
So you might thrive, I should not shrink from Fate.

Day after weary day, through time untold,
Sorrow and I for you did sit and wait;

Besieging Death would beat his sullen drum
All the hard hours, while Sorrow rocked her knees

And cried: "She is a wraith, she will not come;
L'Amour de l'Impossible your soul doth seize!"

Incredibly then you came, fairer than fair,
And Sorrow saw and faded, and a faint

Retreating drum-beat died upon the air,
For life flowed through you, mother, bride and saint.

O dear deliverance, to love you well!

To love you better were a miracle.

WHEN SHE GAZES ON THE SKIES

WHEN she gazes on the skies
Something holy in her eyes
Shines serenely clear and bright—
Beacon in my darkest night!

When she listens to the lark
Her quick spirit stands ahark—
Then light she dances down the dells,
Singing comrade ritornelles.

When she gathers laurel blooms
Sweeter seem their deep perfumes;
In her lissome arms they lie,
Fulfilling all their destiny.

When she merry grows, or pleases
To be mischievous, and teases,
Her bewildering witchery
Plays a thousand pranks on me.

When she looks upon a child,
A change—ineffable and mild—

Touches her being, and she seems
Withdrawn in mystery and dreams.

Lark and laurel, sky and dell,
In her sanctuary dwell:
O that I might enter there
Like a little child at prayer!

NON OMNIS MORIAR

How can this utter silence be?

Why does she never say a word?

Of old, before I spoke she heard,
Reached gentle hands to hearten me.

Silent upon her snow-white bed,

Silent and very pale she lies,

And she has closed her shining eyes—
She fears to dwell among the Dead.

Not for herself she fears: her breath

Is spent, her little race is run;

But must her love, too, be undone?

Her heart's dear secret yield to Death?

Ah, that she could not bear . . . She waits.

I watch her in the deepening night:

Slow through the gloom a glimmering white
From her frail figure emanates.

Her eyelids open, her eyes shine,

She lifts a thin and lingering hand;

No words: we clasp and understand:

Death shall not touch the thing divine!

WINTER TWILIGHT

THE year has reached December days,
The fire is creeping into flame;
Gently I call my comrade's name,
And silent both we sit at gaze.

His head is prest against my knee,
My hand upon his brow is set—
The flames spring upward, and we let
Our fancies play with all they see.

I see the face of one who died
Ere the low whisper she had heard
That sought the moment and the word
To woo the maiden for my bride.

He sees a strange, enchanted land
That wanes and waxes with the flame;
He does not sense himself the same,
And dimly deems I understand.

My listless form yields slowly down;
He also droops with half-closed eyes,
Yet with a mute regard that tries
To feel his master's smile or frown.

Still I behold her face, her smile,
The fire sinks low, and I repose;
The mystery of Wyrð who knows?
Are these real moments we beguile?

I cannot answer, yet am blest;
And from the hearth he turns his eyes
Till they meet mine in trustful wise,
And so he dreams himself to rest.

QUIET SHE RESTS

QUIET she rests: unresting deeps
 Buffet and sway her straining barque;
 Mid the thick night, the starless dark,
In peace she sleeps.

What loveliness may rival hers?
 What soul so innocent and free?—
 Storm strikes across the swelling sea—
She wakes and stirs.

She prays a little. Her prayers cease.
 She smiles. Her lover far away
 Is caring for her. He will pray . . .
She sleeps in peace.

VALEDICTION

UNDER this cold, cumbering stone
Lies a little girl, alone.

It was a joy her life to see—
So glad, and virginal, and free!

Her laughter gave the birds of spring
Sweet phrases for their musicking;

And when she ran and danced about
Quick elvish eyes peered in and out.

There is no laughter now, nor song—
Silent she lies here, all day long.

All day the roses over her
Blossom and blow; the winds murmur;
She heeds them not; she does not stir.

A little girl, so soon at rest
Vague, vernal longings unexpressed
Wakened, then paled within her breast.

God knows I loved her; and I know
(E'en though she never whispered so)
Her heart was mine, for weal or woe.

And now—she lies beneath the roses,
While man his thousand tasks disposes . . .
And the day breaks, and the day closes.

IV

SANTA MARIA DEL FIORE

SUMMITS and vales, slim cypresses and pines—
Arno and April and the Apennines!

And Giotto's captive dream (what dream has ending?)

Lifting his Florence up to God for friending.

Her dream enfolded his. She willed and waited,
Conceived her popes and princes, and created.

Mother and Muse was she of mighty singers;
Grave Dante drank her breast; the beauty-bringers

In cell and cloister felt her mood and fashioned
Mystic Madonnas palely unimpassioned,

With cherubean Babes and saints immortal,
High men and humble kneeling at the portal.

She was the pale Madonna, hers the story
Of pilgrim lords at pause before her glory.

And for the Babe she showed them Beauty solely
The while they worshipped: "Holy, O Thou holy!"

Fear was her fault, too cold a doubt of duty,
Of brows that burned, of hearts that beat, for Beauty.

So Florence fell. Yet strangely sweet and vernal
Beauty is born again in her eternal.

Summits and vales, slim cypresses and pines—
Arno and April and the Apennines!

“NO MAN HATH SEEN GOD”

CLOUDY masks round an Alpine peak,
Huge formless fold involving fold:
The castle of God when His mood is cold,
The cavern of God when He does not speak!

In *Palestrina* the angel choir
Lifting together song and wing
(At Munich they made their musicking),
Their robes aflame with celestial fire!

Wandering wraiths dissolved abroad,
Visions whose focus was lost too soon,
Echoes heard of an unheard tune,—
Those Alps and angels were ghosts of God.

THE WANDERER'S ENGLAND

WHERE the gulls chide by the tidal cove lies home,
Where the meadow meets the cliff, the cliff the sea;
Cool-greening grass and old tranquillity
Breed dream-content. Not so the flooding foam
Of giant breakers climbing still, that come
And boom upon the beach, eternally,
Mightily dying, yet again to be—
The selfsame seas Ragnar was wont to roam!

Ah, that is England! They that drink her breast
Drink a stern sweetness,—pain and secret peace;
In thoughts of her they find their dearest rest,
Though restless they adventure without cease.
Her ancient rainbow is their anadem,
And the salt strength that girds her girdeth them.

LINES WRITTEN IN SURREY

1917

A SUDDEN swirl of song in the bright sky—
The little lark adoring his lord the sun;
Across the corn the lazy ripples run;
Under the eaves, conferring drowsily,
Doves droop or amble; the agile waterfly
Wrinkles the pool; and flowers, gay and dun,
Rose, bluebell, rhododendron, one by one,
The buccaneering bees prove busily.

Ah, who may trace this tranquil loveliness
In verse felicitous?—no measure tells;
But, gazing on her bosom, we can guess
Why men strike hard for England in red hells,
Falling on dreams, mid Death's extreme caress,
Of English daisies dancing in English dells.

THE LAST MOBILIZATION

ENGLAND, we come—
Too hard was the waiting;
We burn to the bugles'
Eager vibrating.

Here are your old reserves,
Rovers and rangers,
From the wild, rough places
And the dared dangers.

Blood of your blood we were,
Salt of your savour;
Spartan you moulded us,
Never to waver.

Doom clanged her iron lips,
A world swayed asunder . . .
Stoutly you battled on,
Faced the fell thunder.

You have not shamed us where
We shadows must tarry:
Grenville is glad of you,
Drake, and King Harry!

Shades? *but we've broken through,*
The Border we've raided;
Strange, stubborn sentinels
We have persuaded.

Sidney salutes you now;
England, here's Clive again;
Wolfe, with his poet's heart;
Richard's alive again!

What though to dusty death
Once we descended?
Soul of your soul we are
Till time be ended.

Nelson and Wellington,
Our captains, commanders,
Marshal their men-at-arms
For France and Flanders.

Let us lift up our hearts,
Devon and Dover,
Men of antipodes,
Sailors from frozen seas,
Each ranger and rover;—

Comrades, with us unite!
God, and the freeman's right!
Lift we our hearts and fight
Till this hell-burst be over!

England, our England,
We share your ongoing,
With full, free banners
Gallantly flowing!

R U I N S

(*Ypres*, 1917)

Ruins of trees whose woeful arms
Vainly invoke the sombre sky—
Stripped, twisted boughs and tortured boles,
Like lost souls—
How green they grew on the little farms!

Ruins of stricken wall and spire,
Stretched mile on desolate mile along—
Ghosts of a life of sweet intent,
Riven and rent
By frantic shell and searching fire.

Ruins of soldiers torn and slain,
Boyish bodies broken for you:
Burned in their hearts the battle-cry! . . .
Lifeless they lie,
Clay crumbling slow to clay again.

THE VIRGIN OF ALBERT

(Notre Dame de Brebières)

Two pause and linger, looking up at Her,
Young comrades, Frank and Briton, side by side:
Death they know well, for daily they have died,
Spending their boyhood ever bravelier;
They wait: here is no priest nor chorister;
Birds skirt the stricken tower, terrified;
Desolate, empty, is the Eastertide,
Yet still they wait, watching the Babe and Her.

Broken, the Mother stoops: the scowling foe
Hurled with dull hate his bolts, and down She
 swayed,
Down, till She saw the toiling swarms below—
 Platoons, guns, transports, endlessly arrayed:
“Women are woe for them! let Me be theirs,
And comfort them, and hearken all their prayers!”

F A L L E N

HE looked on life and art and man's estate;
Dear hopes he felt, though dim;
Cheerly he turned, and there, insatiate,
Death looked on him.

"You also! Come!" . . . there was no faltering;
His boyish eyes and clear
Regarded It, and showed not anything
Of coward fear.

Somewhere beyond the slopes of Time he'll find
The stature of his soul;
So dream we who, remaining here behind,
Not yet are whole.

H A M L E T

He would see all, this Thinker! He would see
Life's changing legend, alien mystery;
He sees, and he is silent: Love and Hate
Fail while he faces unimagined Fate.

TO MARY ARDEN

DID he, madonna, on thy bosom turning,
Look in thy woman-eyes and see soft fires
Glowing and melting, passioning and yearning,
Lit with the mother-light of far desires?
O did he fix his still regard upon them,
Learning their meanings manifold and strange,
Climbing with wonder up to count and con them
Ere they should vanish and the moment change?

The visions that thy soul revealed him then,
Though thou hast died, madonna, may never die:
They dwell eternal in pure Imogen,
Cordelia's truth and Desdemona's sigh,
Rosalind's Arden, Miranda's island wave,
Girlish Ophelia's love, and Juliet's grave.

RICHARD ABBEY AND
JOHN KEATS*

(1817)

ABBey

SHEER folly, John, folly that might become
Stubborn perverseness! A grain of common-sense
Would teach you better. You're a surgeon now,
Yet now precisely you declare, decide
You will not be a surgeon. What *is* this?
Are time and money and—my counselling,
The articles with Hammond, terms at Guy's,
Nothing then, less than nothing, in your view?
O the sure views of striplings come of age!
Flighty, my lad, you're flighty, like your mother;—
She often—

* After Keats had passed his twenty-first birthday and had resolved never to practise surgery, he sought an interview with his trustee and former guardian, Richard Abbey, a wholesale tea and coffee merchant, and announced his intention of adopting poetry as his sole profession. The careful, unimaginative Abbey was much annoyed and called Keats (as he afterwards told John Taylor, Keats's friend and publisher) "a silly boy," prophesying his early failure. Abbey says further, "He brought in not long after a little book which he had got printed. I took it and said that I would look at it because it was his writing, otherwise I should not have troubled my head with any such thing. When we next met I said, 'Well, John, I have read your book, and it reminds me of the Quaker's horse which was hard to catch, and good for nothing when caught. So your book is hard to understand and good for nothing when it is understood.'"

KEATS

You may let her, Sir, alone!

She is no theme for you. Touching this trade
Of surgeon, I have gained its rudiments,
Its disagreeables I have not shunned:

It proved my duty but the other day
To cut and bind a temporal artery;
I did it well enough, and yet it seemed
A miracle that it was done at all.

My busy fingers finished while my mind
Remembered ancient tales of love and rue . . .

I dare not dare again, accept the hazard
Of helpless lives that fade into a dream.

How may I serve two masters, with the one
Secretly swaying all my loyalty?

'Tis time to be the Poet that I am,
Become the Poet that I yet may be.

Nor was it easy, Sir, to reach the truth:

I've wrestled, made-believe, worked, and rebuked
My unbelief. It has not been enough.

The spirit I have wrestled with is not
Of evil, but of good, and I have found
It stronger daily—mightier than I.

Yet you are hurt—how otherwise?—and think
John Keats a thankless fellow, unaware
Of his own better fortune, blamable,
Wayward. I would not wound you—anyone.

George understands it has not been a choice—
And Tom, too—little Fanny will, some day.

Come, Sir, I am a man, however young;
I offer you a man's hand, and affirm
I'm not ungrateful: you have kept your trust
And done your part. And now I shall do mine—
For woe are they who hear in vain the Word
Of Beauty kindling and dilating, Beauty
Calming the fume and fever of our life,
Beauty that bids her followers forever
Be fain to echo her far harmonies!

ABBEY

I am to understand, then, that you think
You may in time become a sort of—scribbler?
Prosper as—Poet? You have used the word;
'Tis not the word I should have used, but let
That pass.

KEATS

I do intend, Sir, to rely
Upon the power of Beauty to make me one.
I've no few fears, my ignorance is much;
I would not seem presumptuous, yet I feel

Flamings within me that will stifle me
Unless I feed them fiercer, yield to them,
Burn me into their fervent fellowship.
And Shakespeare is a great flame; Spenser one;
Marlowe and Milton, and a hundred more;
And some are mild and white, and slowly spire;
And some are cruel-ardent, that consume
And are consumed; and I must be with them . . .
Oh, if I can but glimmer, it is well!
And if I grow and glow through years to come
In larger brotherhood, 'tis very well!
Beauty enlightened them and bade them burn;—
Me likewise, and I must not let her light
Flicker and gutter, least of all deny
Illumination.

ABBEEY

Harkee, John, I am
A patient man, I hope, and practical,
And hence have some acquaintance with the world.
I know that moonstruck minds are hard to move
From their delusions, yet the adage runs:
The pudding's proof is in the eating of it.
I've seen, my boy, some of your random rhymes;
Frankly, they mind me of the Quaker's mare,
Coy in the catching, yet, when caught at last,
A sorry, spavined jade. John, credit me,

I like your spirit, but your stubbornness
Might provoke some to anger. Here are you,
Equipped, certificated, fit to be
A rising surgeon in a settled place—
A steady practice waits at Tottenham.
Within a year or two your principal
Will be again intact, for you will save
(A wife, I hope, to help you) and forget
This balk at the manger. Let the scribbling go!
At best it's desultory, dubious,
At worst a waste of time and substance too.
Learn to be solid, John, and cast away
This talk of Poetry, well enough indeed
For girls, and children, and the playhouses,
But—decorative, eh? for men like us.
Let us be manly men, and know ourselves
Capable grapplers with reality,
Not dreamers of weak dreams! . . . You need a
change,
A holiday, to set you right again.
You've worked hard at your task-work, and you're
tired
And out of sorts. Let's drop discussion now
As though it had not been. In better minds—
The two of us—we'll further talk of this.
What say you?

KEATS

Sir, I'll say a final word:

You jeer—and rightly—at my verse begun,
Hardly begun. 'Tis natural, and many,
Be sure, will join your jeering ere I pass.
I am content, yet I had ventured hope
That open speech between us might invite
Some sanction of my purpose at the last.
Forgive the sanguine, moonstruck stripling, Sir!

No, I would not be bitter; but you are deaf:
You do not hear the beat of whispering wings,
The tumult-hearted thought, the spherul tune,
The vibrant voice of Beauty's lover, Truth,
And the high hymning they together reach—
For this is Poëtry, scorned by men like you.
Yet were it you knew aught of Her intent—
So hard to know—you might remind yourself
Her greatest prophets once were neophytes.

Dearly for this choice unescapable
In coinage you divine not I must pay.

We shall not speak of this ever again,
My mind is fixed, and all my spirit shares
Its purposes. I do avow me Poet—
Poet, and—if 'twill make you comprehend—
PoET, long after your damned counting-house
And coffee-mart have crumbled and dissolved,
Despite the squills and boluses of time.

I bid you, Mr. Abbey, a good morning!
I will see Fanny now—a girl, a child,
And fond of decoration. She has need
Of me, I think; I have sore need of her.

[*Exit.*]

ABBEY [*solus*]

These Keatses! They're a burden to be borne!
Tom's troublesome; Fanny's a handful, too;
George has some gumption, may be guided yet.
John's done for! . . . Still, his wispy-waspy way
Somehow does touch one. Catherine Jennings dead,
Let's hope you mark these trials you've escaped!
Well, duty's duty. . . . Where's that invoice-book?

“ H E R E P A U S E ”

GULFED in the deep immensities of peace,
You, who were Keats, unknow desire and pain;—
She cannot burn upon your breast again:
Her little wiles, her fitful sobbings, cease;
At last the long sweet languor and release
Of Death she likewise learned, and she was fain
To lay her down (ah, not where you have lain!),
Clasping the fringe of Fame, your Golden Fleece.

That skyey lyre, rich dyed in Dorian wine,
Blended the songs of brighter stars and this:
Lulling the dreams of dovelike Madeline,
Chanting in moonlit clouds Endymion's bliss:—
Love's wingèd lyre!—but soon your striving wings
Faltered and failed. . . . Slowly Love broke the
strings.

TO EDGAR POE

DREAM-DIRGES of danger and doom,
Weird, wandering whispers of woe,
Wraith-whispers of infinite woe:
Ligeia! . . . Lenore! . . . Ulalume! . . .
Unearthly dream-dirges of doom—
Of such were your sorceries, Poe!

Wan wonder was fellow to fear,
And fear was funereal joy,
Your fear was a feverous joy;
In “the misty mid-region of Weir”
You followed the phantom of Fear
That fascinates but to destroy.

Pale passager, hardly you knew
The beauty of horror and harm,
The hurt and the healing of harm;—
Dark towers were challenging you,
Dark towers of terror and rue,
Star-litten with ominous charm.

Are your heart-strings a-tremble in heaven
With songs of the secret of pain,
Where peace is the angel of pain,
Where the Pleiads for ever are seven,
Where Israfel stilleth the levin,
And one ye are now who were twain?

HUDSON STUCK*

THE waste lies desolate about her dead . . .

Himself he spared not, flaming his life away
Freely upon God's altar; to hear him pray
Made faith a credible thing, and when he read
Or reasoned, deep sincerities unsaid

That shaped his soul—more eloquent were they
Than e'en that vibrant voice to stir, and stay
The hearts of men upon the living Bread.

Into the wilderness he went with Christ
And wrestled with His spirit: the arctic vast
Involved him, and imperial mountain peaks
Vouchsafed an awful kinship: these sufficed—
These and a hapless folk—to hold him fast,
And unto these eternally he speaks.

* Hudson Stuck, Archdeacon of Alaska, geographer and explorer, reached the summit of Mount Denali (McKinley) on June 7, 1913. He died in Fort Yukon, October 10, 1920.

GOD'S EYES

Marie: Father, what colour are God's eyes?

Father: Guess, sweetheart! You shall have three tries.

Marie: Then are they blue?

Father: Yes, bluer far
Than where the highest heavens are.

Marie: I cannot think of eyes so blue.

Father: God's eyes are brown.

Marie: Father, but you
Told me just now my guess was true.

Father: Still, sweetheart, not the earthy loam
Is brown as are His eyes, the home
Of russet, sepia, and chrome.

Marie: Father, I do not understand.

Father: God's eyes are golden, dear; when land
And sea are bathed in sunset glow,
And holiness seems brooding low,
The eyes of God are there also;
And when the first faint violet hue
Steals tremblingly the petals through

Till its full life is pulsing new,
The flower lifts those eyes to you.
When in the woods the drooping day
Watches the whirling leaves at play,
Then well we know God's eyes are grey;
And, sweetheart, when each quiet night
You fold your hands so sure and tight,
And, with your fresh young soul alight,
Tell to the Father every mite,
Those all-seeing eyes are purest white.

Marie: Is it all true as true can be?

Father: I would not tease you, small Marie!
Nay, you must watch and see, dear maid,
When next the bow in heaven is laid,
God's eyes change slow from shade to shade.

A SMALL BOY PRAYS

JESUS, I wish you'd come and be my brother:
Your mother has the same name as my mother;
I've a gold bugle and a big wheelbarrow,
And I would lend you my new bow and arrow
(The arrow at the end has a red feather)—
Oh, we'd have grand times, me an' you together!

My mother says your mother wasn't able
To reach an inn one time, but found a stable,
Where Joseph made her bed in the cows' manger,
And oxen stood outside to guard from danger;
And when the angels in her lap were laying
God's little Lamb, the other lambs came straying
And knelt down near it, in lamb language praying.

That Lamb was *you*! And then there were some
shepherds,
And Wise Men riding along on lions or leopards,
Or camels, maybe. They called you Christ and Jesus
(Jim is my name), and mother says it frees us
From harm to love you; but I think I love you
Because your bird flies always just above you
(I caught a thrush once, but it died from pining),
And something round your forehead keeps on
shining.

You're living, mother says, in Heaven this minute;
Come down, and you can have my top and spin it!
She says that you can understand me, hear me,
And that the Christ-Child somehow can be near me;
Look, then, I'll ask her, and you ask your mother,
To let you stay a while and be my brother;
I like you fine; we'll climb a tree together,
And play ball after school (mine's reg'lar leather),
And sit beside each other at the table,
And you can tell me all about that stable.

You'd love my mother: she's little, like a fairy;
She'll sing, and tell us tales, my mother Mary;
She knows what boys like—six and going on seven;
She says *your* mother Mary's Queen of Heaven.
Queens' sons in books are princes, and important,
But hurry an' come quick, even if you oughtn't;
And when it's good-bye time, we'll trade each other
Marbles and stamps, and I'll have had a brother!

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